

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4053

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 12/31/75

TAGS: PFOR, PLO, UR

SUBJECT: 'ARAFAT TAKES STEP TOWARD MOSCOW

REF: BEIRUT 4450

1. 'ARAFAT, WHO HAS BEEN REPORTED BY PRESS TO BE ON VERGE OF VISITING USSR FOR LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, IS NOW SAID TO HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE VISIT WITHIN NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY (WAFA) RELEASE OF APRIL 24 (FBIS JN240640) MAKES IT OFFICIAL NOT ONLY THAT PALESTINIAN DELEGATION WILL VISIT SOVIET CAPITAL, BUT THAT 'ARAFAT WILL HEAD GROUP, THUS JOINING PARADE OF ARAB LUMINARIES WHO HAVE RECENTLY MADE SOVIET PILGRIMAGE. PRO-FEDAYEEN DAILY, AL MUHARRIR, OF
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APRIL 24 SPECULATES THAT DEL WILL LEAVE FOR MOSCOW

ON FRIDAY, APRIL 25 (FBIS JN141231).

2. Wafa ANNOUNCEMENT FOLLOWED MEETING EVENING APRIL 23 BETWEEN 'ARAFAT AND SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO LEBANON SOLDATOV. MEETING, SECOND BETWEEN 'ARAFAT AND SOLDATOV WITHIN SEVENTY-TWO HOURS, WAS APPARENTLY OCCASIONED BY "IMPORTANT MESSAGE" FROM SOVIET LEADERSHIP TO 'ARAFAT.

3. LOCAL RUMOR ALSO HAS IT THAT SESSION, INVOLVING ABU IYAD (SALAH KHALAF) OF FATAH, HAWATMEH AND ABD RABBU OF PDFLP, AND ABDUL MAJID RAFI'I, LEBANESE DEPUTY FROM TRIPOLI WHO LEANS TO PRO-IRAQI BAATHIST LINE, ALSO MET EVENING APRIL 23 AT PLO POLITICAL BUREAU IN BEIRUT. LOCAL SPECULATION IS THAT MEETING AIMED AT COORDINATING EFFORTS OF PLO AND "REJECTIONISTS" BUT WE FIND REPORTED LINE-UP, BOTH BY ITS INCLUSIONS AND OMISSIONS, INAPPROPRIATE FOR SUCH PURPOSE. IT IS MORE PLAUSIBLE, IN VIEW 'ARAFAT'S APPARENTLY IMMINENT DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW, THAT THIS SESSION WAS HELD TO PUT PLO HOUSE IN ORDER, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS MARXIST PDFLP'S ROLE, BEFORE 'ARAFAT MEETS WITH SOVIETS. SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVE COULD HAVE BEEN TO ASSURE, INsofar AS POSSIBLE, THAT TENUOUS STAND-OFF BETWEEN PALESTINIANS/LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND PHALANGISTS, IN WAKE OF LAST WEEK'S CONFRONTATION, DOES NOT BREAK DOWN WHILE 'ARAFAT AND OTHER KEY PLO FIGURES ARE AWAY IN MOSCOW. LATTER FACTOR COULD EXPLAIN CURIOUS PRESENCE OF RAFI'I.
GODLEY

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